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TESTIMONY RE: RAISED BILL 126: An Act Concerning Children's Exposure to Chemicals

Public Health Committee
February 28, 2014

Good Afternoon Senator Gerrantana, Representative Johnson and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee.

Thank-you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for nurses related to **RAISED BILL 126: An Act Concerning Children's Exposure to Chemicals**. CNA is a founding partner of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut. I am Mary Jane Williams Ph.D., RN current chairperson of Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association and professor emeritus from Central Connecticut State University. I also serve Steering Committee and the Policy and Advocacy for the National Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments.

I speak in strong support of **RAISED BILL 126: An Act Concerning Children's Exposure to Chemicals**

We don't know what the triggers are to the incidence of disease onset. We are beginning to develop a strong body of knowledge that establishes cause and effect. However, until we have multiple well-grounded research we need to apply the Precautionary Principle that states "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context the

proponent of the activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of the proof. The process of applying the precautionary principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must involve an examination of a full range of alternatives, including no action.”(Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle, Jan. 1998).

Therefore we must ask the ultimate questions:

What do we do with the knowledge we have related to chemicals in our environment?

How do we protect the public we serve with the goal of “Doing No Harm”?

If there is growing consensus that our exposure to toxic chemicals in consumer products is a risk factor for many serious diseases, including cancers and we know Cancer is the 2nd most common cause of death in the U.S. for people under the age of 20 and that the Incidence of childhood cancers has increased by more than 20% between 1975 and 1990 (particularly leukemia and brain cancers) we are charged as health professionals and legislators to take action that will avert the exposure to these unsafe potentially deadly chemicals.

Our “lack of action” has a direct impact on the children in our communities and their families. We are asking that the “Precautionary Principle” be applied and that Connecticut be proactive in banning hazardous chemicals, which are found in an array of children’s product. All of these chemicals are potentially harmful to children and their healthy development. Phasing out as many chemicals of concern as possible is essential to the health of our children.

This proposed legislation requires DPH to identify chemicals of concern to children based on toxicity and exposure hazard and 2) make recommendations for action to the legislature every 2 years. It represents progress in the right direction aimed at protecting our children. There is no cost to the Department and CT businesses that use

identified chemicals can work with the Chemical Innovations Institute to find safer alternatives. This will advance green chemistry innovation in the State.

It is our responsibility to educate the public to make safe choices for themselves and their families and to advocate for good health. In order to advocate for good health we must eliminate exposure to chemicals and their by-products. Nurses are the largest group of health care providers nationally. Nursing practice focuses on prevention and wellness. This legislation is about protecting our children, the next generation and the public. "It is about the protecting health of the public."

Thank you for your time. We strongly urge the committee to vote favorably to support **RAISED BILL 126: An Act Concerning Children's Exposure to Chemicals.**

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and for your continued effort to protect the public health of Connecticut residents.

Mary Jane M. Williams PhD., RN